

Gc
974.202
Ex2e
1770153

REYNOLDS HISTORICAL
GENEALOGY COLLECTION

ALLEN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 1833 01095 9804

EXETER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bulletin No. 4

ACCOUNTS OF EXETER

(1750-1800)

Edited by

HOWARD T. EASTON

and

WILLIAM G. SALTONSTALL



EXETER, N. H.

The News-Letter Press

1938

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

1911

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

1911



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

1911



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

EXETER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bulletin No. 4

ACCOUNTS OF EXETER
(1750-1800)

1770153

Edited by

HOWARD T. EASTON

and

WILLIAM G. SALTONSTALL



EXETER, N. H.

The News-Letter Press

1938

F
84226
25

EASTON, HOWARD T

ed.

Accounts of Exeter (1750-1800) edited by
Howard T. Easton and William G. Saltonstall.

Exeter, N.H., News-letter press, 1938.

28p. (Exeter historical society. Bulletin
no. 4)

Contents.--1. James Birket.--2. The Marquis
de Chastellux.--3. Joseph Hadfield.--4. George
Washington.--5. Timothy Dwight.--6. Duke de La
Roche foucault Lioncourt.--7. Samuel Tenney.

ift '39

SHLEF CARB

NL 39-7388



The following series of "impressions" of Exeter contains accounts by visitors to the town during the latter half of the 18th century. Except for Dr. Tenney's more formal description, they *are* impressions rather than studies of Exeter. They are interesting in that they show how the town appeared to men of such different callings as a West India merchant, a chief executive of the United States, and a president of Yale College. The Exeter Historical Society publishes these sketches of the town as a small contribution towards the celebration of the Tercentenary of the Wheelwright settlement.

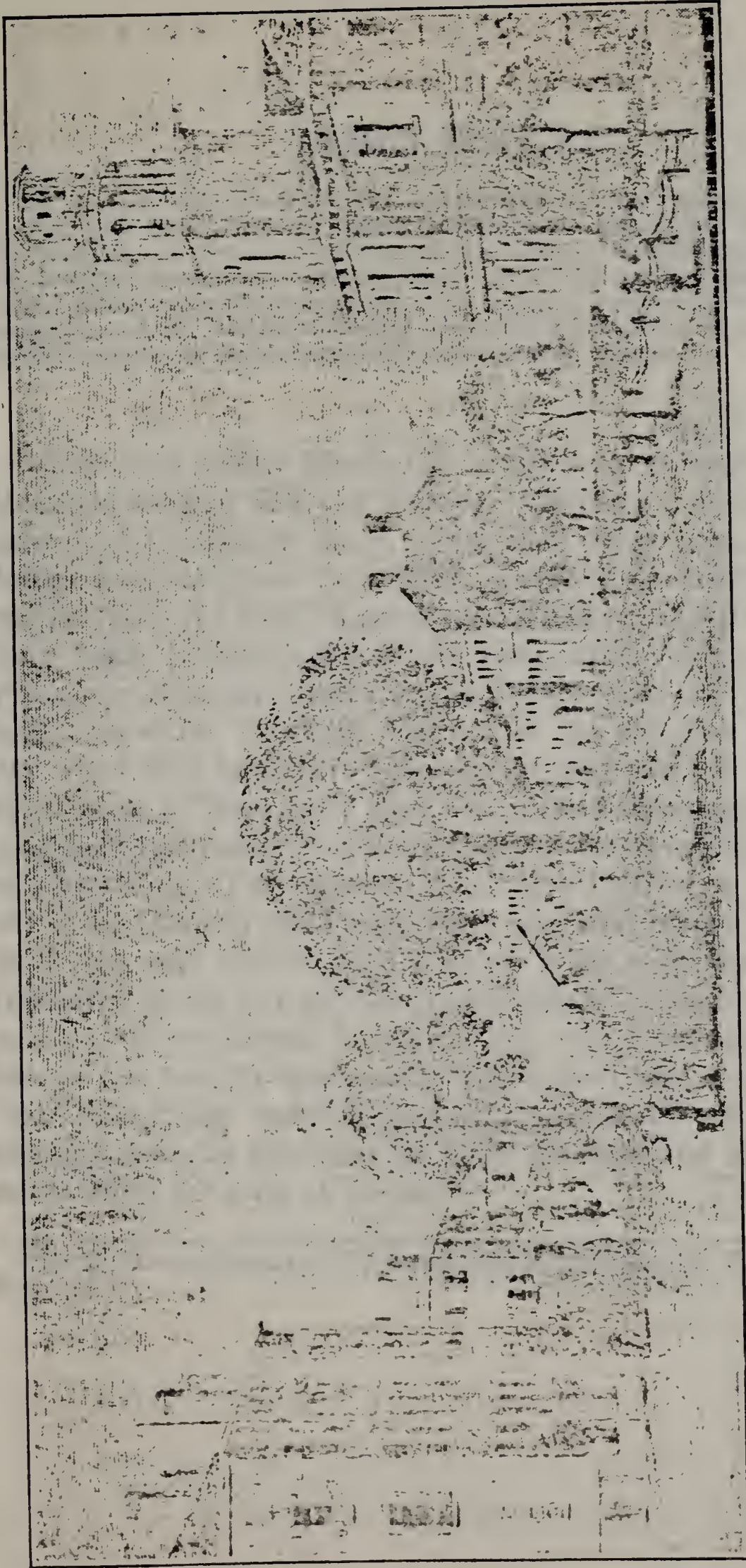


137

ACCOUNTS OF EXETER

1. JAMES BIRKET
2. THE MARQUIS DE CHASTELLUX
3. JOSEPH HADFIELD
4. GEORGE WASHINGTON
5. TIMOTHY DWIGHT
6. DUKE DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULT LIANCOURT
7. SAMUEL TENNEY





The first Squamscott Gov. Gilman's Benj. C. Gilman's The Granite Bank The First Church
Burley Tavern Deacon Brooks's

A REPRODUCTION OF AN ENGRAVED BANK NOTE, GIVING A VIEW OF FRONT STREET
LOOKING WEST, ABOUT 1840

JAMES BIRKET*

[In August, 1750, James Birket, a merchant and sea captain from Antigua in the West Indies, whence he had recently come, drove over to Exeter from Portsmouth. A glance at the Portsmouth Customs Records shows the extent of Antigua's commercial relations with this section of New England at that time. Birket appears to have been "in frequent communication with many merchants of the Northern colonies, and probably acted as correspondent and factor for them in their commercial dealings with Antigua."]

August 24, 1750.

Went with Henry Sherburne in his chair to Exeter 15 miles fine road & dined with Col^o Gilman; the town is Scituate upon a branch of Piscataway river, where they have a large Wooden bridge over the Same where there is severell sawmills Grist mills &c^o and here the build Ships of good Burthen, this Branch of the river being Navigable up to the town which is well built and Pleasantly Scituated there is two Presbyterian meeting houses here, one of the Newlight And one of the old, but 'tis hard to Say which Sees best there Seems to be 100 houses or more in the town, some of them built after the modern taste which make a-very good apearance; The People here as well as in Other branches of Piscataway river complain that there Lumber is far to fetch out of the Country and Stand, them very dear which really seems to be the case for the road that we went was extreamly well Inhabited all the way and the ground generally Cleared and as far as we could see beyond the town, but indeed one cannot see far here as the country is so much upon a level that it's few Places that Afford- any distant prospect, Abundance of Lumber is brought down to this town by Land carriage and afterwards is rafted down the river to Portsm^o

*"Some Cursory Remarks" by James Birket, published by Yale University Press, 1916.

MARQUIS DE CHASTELLUX*

[The Marquis de Chastellux was born of ancient family in Paris, in 1734. He entered the French army at the age of 15 and commanded a regiment at 21. His deep interest in literature and science secured him election to the French Academy. In 1780, he came to America as a Major-General in the army of Count Rochambeau. He was highly thought of by enemies and friends alike, amongst the latter, George Washington. While in America, the Marquis kept a record of his travels during the years 1780 to 1782. This he published about 1786, and an English translation was made in 1787. An American edition came out in 1828. The Marquis died in 1788.]

We left this place [Haverhill, Mass.] the 9th [Nov., 1782] at nine in the morning, our road lying through Plastow, a pretty considerable township; after which we met with woods, and a wild and horrid country. We saw a great number of pines and epicias; there are also several large lakes, some of which are traced upon the chart. Since we quitted the confines of Connecticut, I have in general observed a great number of these ponds, which contributed to increase the resemblance between this country and that of the Bourbonnois, and the Nivernois, in France. Twelve miles from Haverhill is Kingston, ~~a~~ township inferior to those we had observed upon the route; and at the end of eighteen miles is Exeter, at present the capital of New-Hampshire, that is to say, the place where the President or Governor resides, and the members of the state assemble. It is rather a handsome town, and is a sort of port; for vessels of seventy tons can come up, and others as large as three or four hundred tons are built here, which are floated down Exeter river into the bay of that name, and thence to Piscataqua. We stopped at a very handsome inn kept by Mr. Ruspert, which we quitted at half past two; and though we rode very fast, night was coming on when we reached Portsmouth. The road from Exeter is very hilly. We passed through Greenland, a very populous township, composed of well built houses. Cattle here are abundant, but not so handsome as in Connecticut, and the state of Massachusetts. They are dispersed over fine meadows, and it is a beautiful sight to see them collected near their hovels in the evening. This country presents, in every respect, the picture of abundance and of happiness. . . .

*"Travels in North-America in the Years 1780-81-82, Part III, Journal of a Tour in New-Hampshire, the state of Massachusetts, and Upper Pennsylvania," by the Marquis de Chastellux, p. 309 & pp. 313 and 314, edition of 1828.

New-Hampshire hitherto has no permanent constitution, and its present government is no more than a simple convention; it much resembles that of Pennsylvania, for it consists of one legislative body, composed of the representatives of the people, and the executive council; which has for its chief, a President, instead of Governor. But during my stay at Portsmouth, I learnt that there was an assembly at Exeter, for the purpose of establishing a constitution, the principal articles of which were already agreed on. This constitution will be founded on the same principles as those of New-York and Massachusetts. . . .

When I was at Portsmouth the necessaries of life were very dear, owing to the great drought of the preceding summer. Corn costs two dollars a bushel, (of sixty pounds weight) oats almost as much, and Indian corn was extremely scarce. . . . Butcher's meat only was cheap, selling at two-pence halfpenny a pound. That part of New-Hampshire bordering on the coast is not fertile; there are good lands at forty or fifty miles distance from the sea, but the expense of carriage greatly augments the price of articles, when sold in the more inhabited parts. As for the value of landed property it is dear enough for so new a country. Mr. Ruspert, my landlord, paid seventy pounds currency per annum, (at eighteen livres, or fifteen shillings the pound) for his inn. Lands sell at from ten to sixteen dollars an acre. The country produces little fruit, and the cider is indifferent.

JOSEPH HADFIELD*

[Joseph Hadfield, a young Englishman, who passed through Exeter on September 20, 1785, has left the earliest known *printed* description of the town. He was born in Exeter, England, of a family prominent in the mercantile trade. His mission to America was the collection of debts owed his father's firm since before the Revolutionary War by merchants in this country. He was a member of the famous Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society.]

We then proceeded forward to Exeter. Here we ordered dinner and while it was preparing I took a walk round the town. I cannot but dwell upon the situation of this place which is really

*From "An Englishman in America—Joseph Hadfield's Diary."

beautiful, being upon the banks of the main branch of the river Piscataway which runs a course of about twenty miles to Portsmouth. This is a great place for building ships. We saw a beautiful one upon the stocks. Some of the American frigates were built here. The river receives the influence of the tide which rises from 8 to 11 feet to the foot of Piscataway Falls, where the navigation terminates. These falls, with the assistance of art, form a dam which supplies a number of mills that are upon its banks. They are mostly grist or saw mills. There is an oil mill which I went to see. The process of making it is simply this. Take a basket of flaxseed, and put it into a dry cauldron under which there is a fire. The seed is heated to give it expansion. It is then put into a mill, or rather a large millstone is turned in a circular direction and in the channel or rather the course it turns, the seed is placed and is by this means bruised. From this it is put into a kind of cave and by the means of a compressing power the oil is squeezed out. A basket yields six quarts of oil.

GEORGE WASHINGTON*

[George Washington, during his first administration, set the precedent for presidential tours about the country. Partly to familiarize himself with the new nation, partly to repair his health, he thoroughly covered the whole Union.

Having stayed at Portsmouth, he rode over to Exeter on the morning of November 4th, 1789. The road was lined by people from Stratham on, but the cavalcade which was to receive him at Exeter was not ready for such a prompt arrival; so Washington, accompanied by Major William Jackson and Tobias Lear, his secretaries, had to be satisfied with the 13-gun salute of Captain Simon Wiggin's artillery company.

In Exeter for only an hour (he was expected at Haverhill at 2:30), the President was served lunch at Col. Folsom's tavern. Here, "according to tradition Margaret Emery, a relative of the landlord's wife, sought and obtained the honor of waiting on Washington. As a reward she had a pleasant word and a kiss from the President." Here, too, Major Nicholas Gilman, Washington's former Assistant Adjutant General, waited upon him.

That evening "a very sumptuous entertainment and ball was given, which was graced with the presence of above an hundred of the first characters in the state, of both sexes. Exeter could not be satisfied, even when he had gone, not to celebrate his coming."

Washington's reference to Exeter in his diary is brief, and notable for its failure to mention the young Academy.]

This is considered as the second town [in importance, not population] in New Hampshire, and stands at the head of the tide-water

*As quoted in "Washington in New Hampshire," by Elvin Page.

of the Piscataqua River; but ships of 3 or 400 tons are built at it. Above (but in the town) are considerable falls, which supply several grist mills, 2 oyle mills, a slitting mill, and snuff mill. It is a place of some consequence, but does not contain more than 1,000 Inhabitants. [This is too low an estimate by 700.]

A jealousy subsists between this town (where the Legislature alternately sits), and Portsmouth; which, had I known it in time, would have made it necessary to have accepted an invitation to a public dinner, but my arrangements having been otherwise made, I could not.

From hence, passing through Kingstown, (6 miles from Exeter) I arrived at Haverhill about half-past two, and stayed all night. The lands over which I travelled to-day, are pretty much mixed in places with stone—and the growth with pines—till I came near Haverhill, where they disappeared, and the land had a more fertile appearance. The whole were pretty well cultivated, but used (principally) for grass and Indian corn.

[Bell's "History of Exeter," p. 100, thus describes his departure:

A cavalcade of gentlemen escorted him outside the village. He took the road to Kingston, on his way to Haverhill, Massachusetts. When he reached the top of Great hill, he directed the driver of his carriage to halt, that he might look back upon the wide view of Exeter and its vicinity. He gazed a few moments at the fair landscape that lay at his feet and stretched away to the ocean, and remarked admiringly upon its beauty; and with this pleasant farewell to Exeter he went on his way.]

TIMOTHY DWIGHT*

[Timothy Dwight, "Congregational divine, author, president of Yale College from 1795 to 1817," visited Exeter on October 4, 1796. His "Travels in New England" was written to record how that section appeared and "to refute foreign misrepresentations of America." It was his one great work. The sedentary nature of his duties at Yale led him to devote his vacations, "particularly that in the autumn, which includes six weeks, to a regular course of travelling." He kept a journal of his travels, planning to use it as the basis of his book.]

Oct. 4, 1796.

Exeter is a considerable town, situated on the falls of Squamscut, or Exeter river, a branch of the Pascataqua, about fourteen

*"Travels in New-England and New York," by Timothy Dwight, publ., 1823.

miles from Portsmouth. The tide flows up this river to the town, where its progress is terminated by a ridge of rocks. The highest **rise of the tide** is about eleven feet. The river is therefore navigable to these falls for vessels of five hundred tons. At a small distance above the town, the Squamscut is joined by another stream, called Little river. On these waters are erected eight grist-mills, six saw-mills, two oil-mills, two chocolate-mills, two fulling-mills, one paper-mill, one snuff-mill, one slitting-mill, and a furnace. In the summer, however, there is sufficient water for the grist-mills and fulling-mills only.

Granite, though not without considerable labour, is here wrought into handsome materials for building. Marl has been found here.

The soil of Exeter is various. The centre of the township is a fertile plain, particularly favourable to the growth of maize. I was very credibly informed, that, although planted year by year for a great length of time, and cultivated with a husbandry moderately skilful, it still yields plentiful crops. Some parts of the township are good, some indifferent, and others poor. All of them, however, might easily, with a superior cultivation, become more productive than the proprietors could be induced to believe.

Exeter contains about two hundred and twenty houses, of which many are indifferent, many decent, and some of a still higher class. The court-house is a good building; one of the churches very ordinary, and the other handsome. This structure is of wood, and was erected at the expense of seventeen thousand dollars.

I have already mentioned Exeter academy. It was founded in the year 1781 by the Honourable John Phillips, LL.D., of this town. Its funds, which, as is said, amount to about 80,000 dollars, were almost all given by this gentleman. The interest of 6,666 dollars 67 cents, or £1,500 sterling, is appropriated to the purpose of boarding poor scholars of promising characters, while they are qualifying themselves to enter upon a collegiate education. This institution, like that of Andover, is eminently respectable and prosperous. The academical building is a handsome structure, standing at the bottom of a spacious yard, about one-fourth of a mile south-west of the court-house. It is seventy-six feet

in length, and thirty-six in breadth, and contains all the accommodations, either necessary or convenient, for the system of education pursued here, and is superior to any other building destined to the same purpose within my knowledge.

This academy is under the direction of seven trustees, a preceptor, and an assistant. The number of students is usually from sixty to eighty.

The trade of Exeter is much smaller than it was formerly; five or six vessels only being employed by the inhabitants in foreign commerce. A manufactory of sail-cloth and twine was established here, in 1790 or 1791, by Thomas Odiorne, Esq., and has met with some success. Ship-building was heretofore a considerable and profitable business in this town. Since the revolution it has declined. A few vessels, however, are built annually, and a great quantity of saddlery is manufactured; more, probably, than in any other town in New-England.

The morals of the inhabitants have been much improved during the last half century. Formerly, they were employed to a great extent in the business of getting lumber. The effects of this dissolute business I shall consider hereafter. Suffice it now to say, that such of the people of Exeter as were engaged in it were poor, idle, haunters of taverns, and devoted to all the baser pursuits of vulgar vice. In consequence of the termination of this business, industry has succeeded to sloth, regularity to dissoluteness, thrift to poverty, and comfort and reputation to suffering and shame.

Exeter, though low and flat, is eminently healthy. The principal inconvenience of climate in this region, and all along this coast, an inconvenience supposed by some persons to have increased gradually for many years, in consequence of disforested the country, is the prevalence of easterly winds. Throughout the months of April and May they predominate, and blow with an efficacy unknown in the western parts of New-England. The delicate fruits are often destroyed by their chilling influence. Even the leaves of some of the tender trees are at times so agitated by these blasts as to perish. On the peninsula of Cape Cod, the inhabitants defend their orchards by trees of a more hardy nature.

The same expedient might probably be repeated elsewhere with advantage.

These winds are generally considered as peculiarly unfavourable to persons of slender constitutions, especially to those who are liable to pulmonic diseases. It has been supposed, that one-third, or at least one fourth, of the deaths, which take place here, are produced by the consumption.

The inhabitants of this town have been distinguished by a meritorious attention to their schools.

Exeter was settled by a number of people from Braintree in Massachusetts, and was incorporated in 1638. For a long period the inhabitants were distressed by the inroads of the savages, although less than several of the neighbouring settlements. So great were the discouragements from this source, that there were only twenty voters so late as the year 1680. In the year 1697, it was remarkably preserved by the following accident:—A number of the women and children, having imprudently ventured into the fields to gather strawberries, some men, returning from their work, fired an alarm-gun to frighten them. At this moment a body of Indians lay concealed in the skirts of the town. Upon hearing the gun they imagined themselves to be discovered, and fled.

The number of inhabitants in Exeter, in 1775, was 1,741; in 1790, 1,722; in 1800, 1,727; and in 1810, 1,759.

A number of intelligent, genteel, and very respectable families reside in this town.

DUKE DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULT LIANCOURT*

[The Duke de la Rochefoucault Liancourt, a well known and distinguished member of the French nobility, made journeys in 1795, 6 and 7 "for philosophical and commercial observation throughout a great part of North America." "A traveller of no ordinary discernment and diligence in enquiry," he was a friend and pupil of Mr. Arthur Young, the English author of many journals of

* Extract from "Travels through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada, in the Years 1795, 1796 and 1797;" by the Duke de la Rochefoucault Liancourt. . . . 2d edition. London, Printed for R. Phillips, 1800. Translated by H. Neuman.

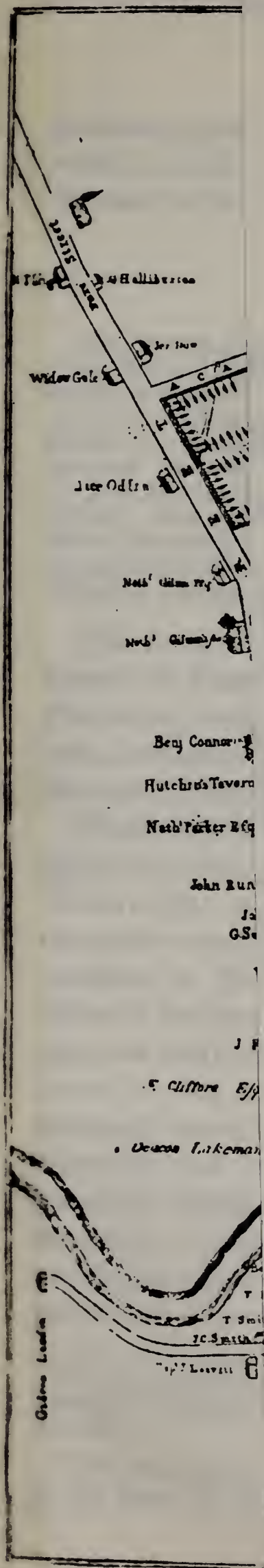
husbandry. Interested in commercial and industrial as well as agricultural progress, he skillfully painted a lively picture of the young nation at work and play. A victim of the French Revolution and one of its most illustrious exiles, "he inclines, at times, to encourage the milder class of those political sentiments . . . little adapted to promote the general welfare."

It is interesting that Liancourt saw fit to make note of "an academy in this town." Liancourt was in Exeter in 1796.]

This town, fourteen miles distant from Portsmouth, is the seat of the government of New-Hampshire, and situate in the county of Rockingham, on the river Surampscot, at the head of the bay of Piscataqua. It contains about three hundred and fifty houses and from sixteen to seventeen hundred inhabitants. The houses are tolerably neat; and the place receives a good share of activity from several mills for corn, paper, fulling, tobacco, chocolate, and sawing, and from some iron-works.

I have observed that there was an academy in this town. It was incorporated in 1781 by an act of the legislature, under the name of "Phillips's Exeter Academy," from the name of a Mr. Phillips, a minister of Exeter, who was the principal donor to it.— Before the revolution, and at the time when Portsmouth carried on an extensive commerce, many vessels were built at Exeter: but, since the decline of the trade of Portsmouth, the ship-building at Exeter has dwindled almost to nothing; not more than two or three vessels being annually built there, and these being only sloops. No vessels above the burden of twenty tons can go up to that town.

Under the head of Portsmouth I forgot to notice a particularity which would there have been more properly placed than under the head of Exeter, although the same fact exists here also. It is, that in that considerable town, where all the houses except one or two are built of wood, the only mode practised for cleaning the chimneys is to set them on fire. That operation is performed in rainy weather, that the roofs, which are covered with shingles, may be the less exposed to catch fire from the flying sparks. There is not an instance on record of any mischief having been caused by this singular process of cleaning the chimneys. The want of chimney-sweepers first gave rise to this practice, which is at length so thoroughly established by habit, as to be now employed in preference to any other, even when sweeps happen to



pre-also

iated 5, he army. st of not ition 1793 ne in sties, the

n a , or erly me

c of ohn an the ves o a ere as lar m- ng ts, ey air

uel oll.

ied



PLAN of the
COMPACT PART of the TOWN of
EXETER,
AT THE HEAD OF THE SOUTHERLY BRANCH OF
PISCATAQUA RIVER
By P. Merrill
1802.

pass through the town. The same custom almost universally prevails in all the small towns or villages of New-England, and also in many other parts of America.

SAMUEL TENNEY*

[Dr. Samuel Tenney was born at Byfield, Mass., in 1748, and was graduated from Harvard College in 1772, after which he studied medicine. In 1775, he settled in Exeter, whence he went as a surgeon to join the Revolutionary Army. After the war, he returned to Exeter, where he married and resided the rest of his life in a house† located where the Courthouse now stands. He did not practice medicine, but entered politics, helping to form the Constitution of New Hampshire in 1791, and serving as Judge of Probate from 1793 to 1800, after which he went to Congress for three terms. His death came in 1816. He was a member of several literary, historical, and scientific societies, among them the Massachusetts Historical Society, for which he wrote the following account of Exeter in 1795.]

The town of Exeter is situated at the head of the tide, on a branch of Piscataqua river, by the natives called Squamscot, or Swamscot, about fourteen miles, as the road runs, southwesterly from Portsmouth, the capital of the State; and at nearly the same distance northwesterly from Newbury-Port, in Massachusetts.

The first settlement was made in the year 1638, by a number of emigrants from Braintree, then a part of Boston, under Mr. John Wheelwright, who had previously purchased of the aboriginals an extensive tract of land, now constituting a large part of the counties of Rockingham and Strafford. "Judging themselves without the jurisdiction of Massachusetts, they combined into a separate body politic, and chose rulers and assistants, who were sworn to due discharge of their office, and the people were as solemnly sworn to obey them. The laws were made in a popular assembly and formally consented to by the rulers. This combination subsisted three years." "In the year 1642, finding themselves comprehended within the claim of Massachusetts, and being weary of their inefficacious mode of government, they petitioned the court, and were readily admitted under their

*"A Topographical Description of Exeter in New Hampshire," by Dr. Samuel Tenney, Corresponding Member of the Historical Society, Mass. Hist. Coll. vol. IV.

†This house has since been moved to No. 65 High Street and is now occupied by Mr. Dana W. Baker.

jurisdiction. William Wenborne, Robert Smith, and Thomas Wardhall, were appointed their magistrates, and they were annexed to the county of Essex."

Exeter having been long a frontier town, the inhabitants were frequently harrassed by the savages, in the successive wars, in which the country was engaged with them: but they suffered far less than those of most other places equally exposed; and the settlement was never broken up. Their progress in population, however, appears to have been rather slow; for in the year 1680, when New-Hampshire became independent of Massachusetts, the qualified voters in the town were only twenty. Exeter was originally so extensive that three towns have, at different times, been detached from it; viz. Newmarket in the year 1727, Epping in 1741, and Brentwood in 1742. Their united population now amounts to about twice that of the parent town.

The first CHURCH was formed immediately after the settlement of the town, in the year 1638, under the Rev. Mr. John Wheelwright. "It consisted of eight persons, who, with their minister, had been dismissed from a church in Boston." In the year 1643, Mr. Wheelwright removed to Wells, in the Province of Maine. The succession of ministers since is as follows:

	<i>Aet.</i>
Rev. Samuel Dudley, settled in 1650, deceased in 1683 . . .	77
Rev. John Clarke, settled in 1698, deceased in 1705 . . .	35
Rev. John Odlin, settled in 1706, deceased in 1754 . . .	72
Rev. Woodbridge Odlin, settled in 1743, deceased in 1776 .	57
Rev. Isaac Mansfield, settled in 1776, removed in 1787	
Rev. William Fred. Rowland, in 1790	

About the year 1745, a new society was formed, over which the Rev. Daniel Rogers was settled in 1750. He died in 1785, Aet. 79, and was succeeded by the Rev. Joseph Brown, in 1792.

As this separation was attended with a violent convulsion, it was followed by a series of mutual injuries and resentments, which greatly interrupted the harmony of society for many years. The actors have now all become extinct, without having communicated their prejudices to their descendents: In consequence of which, good neighborhood, harmony, and sociability, are re-established; and perhaps the United States do not afford an in-

stance of a town, whose meetings for transacting publick business are conducted with more good humor, decorum, and unanimity, than those of Exeter. For this happiness, we are, in some measure, indebted to the good fortune of having among us no man of influence, who will *condescend* to head a party.

Exeter is bounded northerly on Newmarket and Stratham; easterly on Hampton and Hampton-falls; southerly on Kensington and Kingston; and westerly on Brentwood and Epping. It is of an irregular figure, which might square upwards of four miles. The body of the town lies about the falls (which separate the fresh from the tide water) principally on the western side of the river. It consists of about 120 houses, irregularly scattered over an area of nearly a mile in length, and generally about one eighth of a mile in width. The whole town, when the federal census was taken, contained 1722 inhabitants. Its population was nearly the same before the revolution. The compact part of the town is more populous than at that period, but the skirts are thinned in proportion. In justice, however, to the fecundity of the inhabitants of Exeter, it ought to be observed, that emigrants from it have, at all periods, been pretty numerous. They, or their descendents, may be found scattered over most parts of the state, besides many in Vermont and the district of Maine. Add to this that Gilmantown, now the second in population in New-Hampshire, was settled by emigrants from Exeter.

The SOIL, in different parts of the town, is various. On the eastern side of the river it is generally of a good quality. The centre of the town consists of an extensive sandy plain, intersected by several ravines, into which it is drained by numerous springs, forming, in the course of half a mile, a considerable brook. This plain, when properly manured, produces excellent crops of indian corn; and is remarkable for not requiring to be fallowed. Some parts of it have been annually planted ever since the settlement of the town. One gentleman, lately deceased, dropped the seed for more than sixty successive crops on the same field, which will still, in a good year, yield thirty bushels to an acre. The skirts of the town, on the western side of the river, are a mixture of very good, indifferent, and very poor land. On the river, near

the centre of the town, is a considerable body of low interval. It has hitherto, either through negligence or mistaken ideas of its quality, been so little attended to, that it has produced only an inferior kind of English hay: But some experiments, lately made, demonstrate, that, by proper treatment, it might be converted into as valuable a tract of land as any in the county. Upon the whole, although the soil of Exeter is not so generally good as that of several neighboring towns, yet there is a good proportion of land capable of producing plentiful crops of most kinds of vegetables, usually cultivated in this part of the country. The general growth of timber is oak, pine, beech, and hickory, with several species of maple, birch, elm, etc.

The principal STREAMS by which the town is watered, are Squamscot, commonly called, by the inhabitants, Great River, to distinguish it from another much less, (and, by people in the neighboring towns, Exeter River) and Little River. The principal branch of the former arises in Chester, and after running through Sandown, Poplin, Brentwood, and a considerable part of Exeter, affording many valuable mill-seats, tumbles over a fall of 20 or 30 rods in length, and meets the tide in the centre of the town. It then spreads into a spacious bason, which, at high water, is a very great ornament to the place. Little River arises in Brentwood, and makes a junction with Great River about a third of a mile above the town. Over the falls are thrown two dams, affording seats for four double-geered corn-mills, four saw-mills, two oil-mills, and one fulling-mill. There are four corn-mills, two saw-mills, a fulling-mill, a paper-mill, a slitting mill, and a furnace, on several other falls. Of all these, the corn-mills and fulling-mills alone can commonly work in the summer.

The town is plentifully furnished with STONES. They are of the hard grey kind; and may, with sufficient labour, be wrought into handsome underpinning for houses. Many parts of the town abound in clay, suitable for bricks and earthen ware. The former might be made for exportation in any quantity; especially as there is a plenty of pine wood for burning them, within a small distance of the clay banks; which in some places extend to the borders of the river, so that the bricks might be thrown from the

kiln into a boat. Of the latter, a sufficient quantity is made to supply a pretty extensive district of country. On a small stream, in the western part of the town, is a body of marle, so highly valued in Europe as a manure; but how extensive, I have not been able to learn.

The first settlers of Exeter, like those of all the other towns on the lower falls of the various branches of Piscataqua river, devoted their principal attention to LUMBERING. Of all honest employments this is well known to be one of the worst. It serves to keep those engaged in it in a perpetual state of poverty; while, at the same time, it commonly ruins their morals, and induces a premature old age. Though one of the most laborious pursuits, it seems to be of a peculiarly fascinating nature; for every other kind of business is made to yield to it; and agriculture itself is pursued only as an auxiliary. The only gainers by this favorite employment are the traders, who purchase, and the merchants, who export the lumber. Of these many have made handsome estates. Fortunately for Exeter their lumber has been, for many years, exhausted. Nor is there much left in Newmarket, Epping and Brentwood, the towns detached from it. The alteration produced in the face of this tract of country, within the last twenty or thirty years, in consequence of the failure of this business, is very great; and fully equalled by the improvement observable in the morals, manners and fortunes of the inhabitants. Before the late war, the taverns in Exeter (of which it always had a sufficient number) were every night thronged with people from this and the neighboring towns, who seldom all retired sober. Our publick houses are now orderly, quiet habitations, only for the purpose of accommodating travellers, and people, whom business at the courts of law, or at the publick offices, bring into town. There is no place which does not contain some idle, dissolute, and intemperate people; but the general mass of the inhabitants of the district of which I am speaking, having long since relinquished lumbering, with its attendant vices, are now employed in agriculture and the mechanick arts. In consequence of this, they are improving their estates by their industry, economy, and good-husbandry; and securing their reputation and happiness by the regularity of their lives.

I would not be understood to mean that our farmers are remarkable for *neat* husbandry; the reverse of which is too true; but that agriculture is in a flourishing state, compared with its situation at any period before the revolution. Our cultivated lands, though naturally equal in goodness, will not bear a comparison with those of the counties of Essex, Middlesex, and Norfolk, in Massachusetts. This observation is applicable to the whole of the original settlements in New-Hampshire. In some towns, however, in this tract, there are visible marks of the progress of good husbandry; owing, perhaps to the fortunate circumstance of their having in them several gentleman-farmers, who read, observe, and reason. The influence of such men is very observable in their vicinity; and the want of a sufficient number of them scattered throughout our towns, is an evil seriously to be lamented. The scarcity of this class of cultivators, in New England, has probably arisen from two circumstances—the small number of gentlemen of independent fortunes among us, and the little esteem in which agriculture has been holden by such as have not been obliged to pursue it. Till very lately it has been considered as a mean and contemptible business, below the dignity of a gentleman to engage in, and fit only to be pursued by the most ignorant and clownish of the human race. Fortunately, these ideas, which must have originated in the stupid noddles of half-polished people, are going out of repute; and men of the first character for talents and accomplishments now think it no indignity to cultivate the soil. When agriculture shall be generally considered in its proper light, as being not only the most necessary, but one of the most reputable and elegant of all employments; when it shall be fashionable for gentlemen of the highest ranks (for ranks there ever will be in society) to value themselves on being (as they may with propriety be considered) a kind of *humble assistants* to the Deity in the *work of creation*; and when to enjoy the godlike pleasure, they shall after having obtained their competency, devote part of their time to the direction of the various operations of husbandry; then shall we, probably, see a spirit of enterprise and emulation infused into our farmers, which will be productive of the highest advantages to agriculture, and to the various employments with which it is

connected. From the present flourishing state of our country, and the prevalence of just sentiments of the importance of this brand of business, we may contemplate this period as at no great distance; and every liberal and truly publick-spirited mind must anticipate it with pleasant emotions.

From the SITUATION of the body of the town, which is flat, and considerably lower than the surrounding lands, strangers would naturally suspect it to be unhealthy. But it is, in fact, remarkably otherwise; few places in the country affording so little business for physicians. Fevers of all kinds are far less frequent than in the neighboring towns. The common contagious epidemics, as far as I can judge from my own observation, are mild and benign. The consumption seems to be the most prevalent disorder, occasioning about one third of the deaths in our annual bills of mortality. Whether this is an unusual proportion for New England, or not, I am unable to determine. Notwithstanding the general healthiness of the place, I do not know that it has been uncommonly productive of instances either of longevity or fecundity. A single example of each, however, may be produced. *Benjamin Hayley* died, four or five years ago, aged about 100 years. He lived on the banks of the river, where it is many rods wide, and, till within three or four years of his death, was accustomed, once in every summer, to dive from a wharf, and swim across and back again. The last time he attempted it, some of the family, being apprehensive that he had not strength sufficient for the enterprize, accompanied him in a boat; but he proved their fears to be unfounded, by performing it as usual. The family of *Gilman* has ever constituted a considerable proportion of the population of Exeter. They are from hence dispersed over various parts of the state, in a greater plenty, perhaps, than any other name among us. In addition to this, there are about 600 of the name in Gilmantown, which has been settled but thirty odd years. This numerous family proceeded from one pair, who were among the early settlers of Exeter. It is probable there may be many instances of as numerous a progeny proceeding from one stock in the same period; but I am not acquainted with any, in which such numbers, and of the same name, can be found together.

In regard to the WEATHER, one observation presents itself, which is probably of general application; at least within a certain distance from the sea coasts; viz, that the easterly or outwinds are much more common than formerly. In this vicinity they prevail most in the months of April and May. This may arise from the opening of the ground to the sun, by the settlement of an extensive country, back of us, which was formerly an uncultivated desert. Among the most obvious effects in this change in the weather, are many cheerless days to valetudinarians, and a frequent destruction of the fruit of our trees while in embryo. This circumstance ought to induce people, who are forming new plantations of fruit trees, to choose a situation as little as possible exposed to these chilling blasts. When a natural defence is unattainable, perhaps its place might be supplied by planting a thick grove of quick-growing forest trees, to the eastward of the place designed for the orchard, several years before the trees are removed from the nursery. In many towns this is an object worthy of attention, independantly of the protection which such groves would afford to the fruit trees; as wood and timber have already become very scarce. They would, at the same time, be an ornament to the farm. *Et decus et tutamen.*

In MANUFACTURES this town promises to make a respectable figure. Its local situation is peculiarly favourable. It is sufficiently remote from any of those large market towns, which, like a whirlpool, absorb whatever comes within their vortex; and is surrounded by a tract of country producing the necessaries of life in abundance. Hence living is cheap, house-rent is commonly reasonable, and the people in general are in habits of industry and economy. In addition to these circumstances, the town is situated on navigable water, by which the importation of raw materials, and the exportation of manufactures, are facilitated. Before the revolution, ship-building was a very profitable branch of business, to the merchants at least. The vessels were sent, with cargoes of lumber, to the West-India Islands, the produce of which they took on freight to Great-Britain, and there sold. Notwithstanding the loss of this market, there are annually built, in the town, four or five vessels of different burthens, the river being capable of floating down those of 500 tons. Next to ship-

building, the trade that brings most money into the town, is the saddler's. It is asserted, that a greater quantity of saddlery is **manufactured** here than in any town, this side Philadelphia. Part of it is shipped, and part goes into the country.

The only regular manufactory is that of sail-cloth and twine. This was established about four or five years ago, by *Thomas Odiorne*, Esq. It is calculated for eight spinners of warp, and they commonly employ about the same number of weavers. The weft is spun in private families. The legislature allow certain immunities to the persons and stock employed in this manufactory, as being the first of the kind established in the state, and pay a bounty of seven shillings per bolt on the duck manufactured. Notwithstanding the embarrassments which this in common with all such establishments as depend principally on foreign artists, usually have to encounter, and the general prejudice in favour of imported duck, the business is supposed to be tolerably profitable. It is now in the hands of four young gentlemen, who, having their fortunes to make, will probably carry it on with spirit. As they have now a competent knowledge of the business, and a handsome stock, their success is not doubtful.

The quantity of linseed oil, annually manufactured in the two mills before mentioned, is very considerable. At some periods this has been very lucrative, and is always a profitable branch of business. It might be carried on to a much greater extent, were there not a frequent deficiency of water.

There was formerly, at the falls in this town, an *alewife* FISH-ERY, which afforded an abundant supply of that kind of fish, for the inhabitants of the town and vicinity. But for want of sluices in the dams, by which they might ascend the fresh river, and gain proper places for spawning, they have, for many years, almost disappeared. There was also, till within thirty years, a good *bass fishery*, through the whole course of the river. But very great numbers having been imprudently, or rather *wantonly*, taken in one season. they almost totally left it. For several years past, they have been returning to their old haunts, though in small numbers. Could people be restrained from taking them through the ice, it is thought that the river might again be replenished

with them, and the fishery restored. The legislature has passed an act for their preservation; but, through the inattention of those, whose duty it is to guard the laws from violation, it is feared that the generous intention will be frustrated. Laws of this kind not duly enforced, serve only to favour the vicious and irregular, at the expense of the conscientious part of the community.* Three or four miles below the falls are taken a few oysters of a small size, but good relish.

The attention of the town of Exeter to the EDUCATION of the rising generation has, for many years, been exemplary. The sum of money annually raised for the support of schools is now about £180. Of this, about two thirds are expended by the selectmen in the compact part. The skirts are divided into four districts, which draw their proportion of the money, and lay it out in hiring English masters, at such seasons as they judge most convenient. For many years the town supported two *latin* schools. Since the establishment of the Academy, to be mentioned hereafter, one of them has been discontinued, and its place supplied by an *english* school. During the summer half of the two last years, an experiment has been made of combining these schools, and placing them under the direction of the latin master, each instructor performing a distinct part of the duty, and in separate apartments. For want of a suitable building, they are, during the other part of the year, disconnected. The misses attend only through the former period, and are not intermixed with the boys. The success of this experiment has induced the town, at their last annual meeting, to make provision for rendering the system permanent. For the instruction of small children (none being allowed to attend the publick schools, who are incapable of reading in classes) and for teaching needle work, etc., there are six or eight private female schools; and for two years past, there has been one for instruction in drawing, tambouring, embroidery, painting

*"It is said by some, that fish which are spawned in rivers, and descend to the sea, return to those rivers only, where they are spawned. If this principle be true, the breed might be renewed by bringing some of the bass, which are caught in Merrimack river, alive, over the land, to the nearest part of the waters of Piscataqua, a distance not more than twelve miles. This must be done before the spawning season, and might very easily be accomplished." Dr. Belknap's History of N. Hampshire, Vol. iii. p. 178. [This is Dr. Tenney's own note.]

on satin, etc. The number of children annually instructed in these schools is great, and their proficiency in general, such as does honor to their instructors.

This town has the happiness of being the seat of the best endowed academy in the United States. It was founded by the liberal donation of the Hon. John Phillips, LL.D., in the year 1781. Mr. William Woodbridge was publicly inducted into the preceptorship in May, 1783; who resigning the place in 1788, was succeeded by Mr. Benjamin Abbot, the present preceptor. His salary is £150 per annum; and he has an assistant, who usually receives about half this sum. The number of students is from 40 to 60. They are instructed in the english, latin, and greek languages, writing, arithmetick, music, elocution, composition, practical geometry, the first principles of geography and astronomy; and occasionally in some other branches of science. The institution is under the direction of the following board of trustees.

The Hon. John Phillips, LL.D.*

John Pickering, LL.D.

Samuel Phillips, LL.D.

Paine Wingate, Esq.

Oliver Peabody, Esq.

The Rev. Benjamin Thurston.

Benjamin Abbot, A.M.

*Mr. Phillips died since this account was written.

The donation, constituting the original fund for the support of the Academy, consisted in wild lands in several settled townships, in this state, valued at £2000. About half these have been sold. To this were added, in the year 1787, £4000 in specie notes on interest; and in 1789, £2000 more. Some other donations have been made since, so that the fund at present is estimated at about £12,000. The interest of the £2000 last mentioned, is appropriated to the charitable purpose of paying the board of poor scholars, whose talents and characters entitle them to publick patronage, while they are preparing for college. A building has lately been erected, in a healthy and agreeable situation, for the accommodation of the students, and at the expense of the fund. The school

room is calculated for about ninety; and for neatness and convenience is thought to exceed all others known in the country. **The second story** forms a spacious room for exhibitions, and a small one for a library. The building is of wood, 76 feet in length and 36 in width, raised on two courses of hewn stone, and has on the top an elegant cupola. The whole is executed in a style that does honour to the institution, and to the taste of the gentlemen who planned it.

The other **PUBLIC BUILDINGS** are a very handsome and convenient court-house, of nearly the same dimensions as the academy, erected, at the expense of the county, and town, in the year 1792; and two meeting-houses, which have nothing to recommend them but an appearance of *antiquity*.

The General Court usually holds a session in this town once in two or three years. The District and Circuit Courts of the United States, as well as the Superior Court, and Court of Common Pleas for the county of Rockingham, sit here and at Portsmouth alternately. And here, ever since the revolution, have been kept most of the publick offices of the state and county.

Exeter, though at present rather over-stocked, is a tolerably good stand for **TRADE**; and, from its situation, many have supposed it must in time be a populous place. But when we consider the natural difficulty of navigating a small, crooked river, augmented by two bridges, and the vicinity of two large commercial towns, where country produce, being in greater demand for the consumption of their inhabitants, will commonly command a higher price, and find a quicker sale than here, we can hardly look on this as a probably event. We have hitherto employed five or six vessels in foreign trade, principally to the West-Indies. If we can keep the number good, it will be as much as can reasonably be expected. If the town shall ever become much more populous than at present, it must be by the introduction of manufactories, conducted on a large scale. Whether this be a desirable event, those, who are acquainted with the advantages and inconveniences experienced by large manufacturing towns, can best determine. It is undoubtedly of great importance to the publick, that all classes of people be able to procure constant employment;

and such manufactories as provide it for those already fixed, in any place, are so far advantageous. But whether it be good policy for a town to increase its population, by drawing common labourers to it, is doubtful. This, at least, is certain, that the morals of the inhabitants of country villages, which, in New-England, are tolerably pure, would run a great hazard of being contaminated and depraved, by an intermixture of too many foreigners of the lower class of manufacturers, who, it is well known, are too generally idle, intemperate, and disorderly.

Of NEW-HAMPSHIRE at large, it may be observed, that its numbers, its wealth, and its respectability, are rapidly increasing; that its resources for the support of government are such as will, with prudent management, effectually preclude the necessity of heavy publick taxes; that the inveterate party spirit, which agitates and disgraces some states in the Union, is here utterly unknown; the odious distinctions of whig and tory, federal and anti-federal, being entirely out of use: that the class of citizens, who *modestly* pretend to possess more political wisdom, sagacity, and patriotism, than the legislative and executive branches of the federal government combined, have made little progress in any attempts to sow the seeds of disaffection and sedition among their brethren: that the state is progressing, though with great *caution* and *circumspection*, in liberal policy; and that its situation is, in every respect, more prosperous and flourishing than at any former period. It may, with truth, be added, that this situation is very generally acknowledged to be one of the many happy effects which have resulted from the adoption of the federal constitution, and from the enlightened policy, which has so conspicuously directed its administration.

Exeter, April 20, 1795.

F 84226.25

5 9904

